

# SUZUKI PIANO BASICS FOUNDATION NEWS

Volume 3.2, March/April 1998

To facilitate, promote, and educate the public on the way of teaching and playing the piano taught at the Talent Education Research Institute in Matsumoto, Japan by Dr. Haruko Kataoka.

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## DR. SHINICHI SUZUKI, 1898 - 1998



Dr. Shinichi Suzuki, the founder of the Suzuki Method, died in Matsumoto on January 26 at the age of ninety-nine. A funeral mass was held on January 28. The City of Matsumoto will conduct a public memorial celebration for Dr. Suzuki on Tuesday, March 17 at the Kenmin Bunka Hall.

On February 8, the day after the opening ceremony of the Olympics, the *"Olympic Memorial Concert of the Suzuki Method"* was held in Nagano City. Among the pieces on that program were four works performed on ten pianos: *Gigue* - Bach, *Turkish March* - Mozart, *Ritual Fire Dance* - de Falla, and *Hungarian Rhapsody #2* - Liszt.

Dr. Kataoka writes: *"Dr. Suzuki is the person who did the most excellent thing among educators in the twentieth century."* May he rest in peace, knowing that his life has touched hundreds of thousands of the world's children and will continue to touch them, as long as so many dedicated teachers are committed to keeping his method alive.

(Photo courtesy of Art Montzka).

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## THE COOKIE MAN

BY KAREN HAGBERG

For nearly four years, I studied piano at the Talent Education Institute in Matsumoto, from 1988 to 1991. In those days, Dr. Suzuki, although his hearing was fading and his memory was not always clear, at age 89-92, was a daily presence at the *kaikan*. As far as I could tell, he never missed a day the entire time I was there.

Every morning he would arrive, always dressed up, for his group lesson with the violin teachers at 9:00 a.m. We pianists were furiously practicing at that time, before the piano studios got busy with teachers and children. Every day, at the conclusion of the violin class, Dr. Suzuki would go into his office and reappear with an armload of cookies and other treats for all of us *kenkyusei*. There were cookies and tea or coffee like this every morning at around 10:30. We pianists would take a few minutes to join in for our snacks. Dr. Suzuki would often go around the room and personally offer cookies to each one of us. He took great joy in being the cookie man. There were even occasions when, especially before our graduation recitals, we felt we could not take the time to come out of the practice room to have cookies. On those days it was not uncommon for Dr. Suzuki to bring a box of goodies to us as we practiced. He would march right into the room and say, *"Please, eat!"*

For those of us staying long-term in Japan, these treats were very special, as most of us could not have afforded the luxury of sweets and coffee every day. Not only did we have the ordinary packaged cookies, crackers and chips purchased at the grocery store, but often we were the recipients of the elegant gifts Dr. Suzuki frequently received in the form of very expensive Japanese confections or special boxes of chocolate from Europe: things we never would have enjoyed otherwise.

***"HIS JOY IN GIVING THEM SEEMED BOUNDLESS"***

I was recently reading Dr. Kataoka's reflections on the hardships Japanese people experienced after the war. There was never enough food. People had no clothing, no homes, no heat. Dr. Suzuki lived through that experience, and I often think that this was why he took such joy in feeding his students special treats. Our appreciation of them was limited by our own comfortable backgrounds and the minor inconvenience of being unable to afford them on a daily basis. His joy in giving them seemed boundless.

My sister and her 1-year-old son, Orion, came to Matsumoto for my graduation recital. They had met Dr. Suzuki. So when he died, I told her by e-mail. I got a reply back saying, *'I remember he gave Orion a cookie.'*

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***THANK YOU, DR. SUZUKI***

**BY CLEO BRIMHALL**

Our friend, our teacher, our example is free today. His love, his teachings, his example will live on in our hearts. To honor his life, let us resolve to multiply our efforts to follow his teachings:

***Tone has a living soul.***

***Never hurt anybody's heart.***

***Develop a beautiful tone and***

***a beautiful heart.***

***If you have the spirit at a young person,***

***you never age.***

***We know now that every child grows from***

***the environment and it is only possible***

***to make a better world if we educate our***

***children from birth by giving them***

***the example and feeling of a noble spirit,***

***not only in music but in all things.***

***Don't hurry, don't rest - step by step***

***you will get there.***

*If love is deep much can be accomplished.*

*The staff at Piano Basics Foundation joins with Cleo in this expression of appreciation and remembrance.*

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## PIANO TONE: MUSICAL TONE, PART I

BY DR. HARUKO KATAOKA

The piano is an instrument which produces sound no matter who touches it. It does not even have to be a human being, for even if you drop an object on the piano keys, or if a cat walks on them, sound is produced. Those who play other instruments such as strings or winds, and also singers, are therefore heard to say that it is easy to play the piano because tone is easy to produce, while they must go through various procedures and expend deliberate effort to produce sound. They must also be responsible for the intonation of each sound they make. So they therefore conclude that piano must be easy compared with their instruments.

This is a great mistake, and is the source of much trouble. Because most people in this world are not professional musicians, they think that any sound on the piano is a musical sound. They really believe that any sound produced on a very fine piano is music. It cannot be helped if lay people think this way, but anyone who is called a piano teacher who neglects the important study of "what is musical tone" is taking advantage of people's ignorance on the subject. Teachers must teach musical tone, not just any sound. When students come to lessons, the most important thing the teacher must teach is good tone. Of course, there are details about the individual pieces that must also be taught, but the most important things, before everything else, are musical basics and musical tone.

Because tone and melody must be filled with one's heart and soul, this is what is most important in music.

Bad tone (noise) is produced when the keys are hit with stiff fingers, when a "crash" occurs between the finger and the key. Our first impression of such a sound is that it is loud and unpleasant. Of course, loud noise is very disagreeable. [Most people can hear this.] It is not so easy for people to hear small noise [bad tone that is quiet]. This is the kind of light tone that is made by only touching the piano key. It is the same as loud and boisterous noise in that time and rhythm cannot be kept. Many people in this world only memorize pieces and play them with this light tone and with hitting, crashing and other terrible tone. They erroneously equate this with musical performance.

It is not until we can play from our heart of hearts, with fingertips, that a real musical sound can be produced. A teacher, over a period of ten to fifteen years, must teach students how to make sound. Because a piano makes sound no matter who touches or hits it, everyone takes it for granted that they can play pieces with just any tone. But if a piece is memorized without a single note mistake, it is not music if it is not also played with a musical tone. (We sometimes hear such non-musical concerts, and this is why people say they do not like classical music.)

Why is it that so many pianists and piano teachers play with such terrible tone? It is because their colleagues, even at music schools, all play with hard and terrible tone. Human beings are always controlled by a majority. A young pianist honestly told me, when I asked why he played with such a terrible tone, that he thought it was better because everyone played like that.

The great, first-class pianists in the world, Radu Lupu, Minoru Nojima and Maurizio Pollini, whom I heard recently, and the great masters such as Rubinstein, Gieseking, Horowitz, Gould, etc., whom I hear on recordings, all play with a musical tone with all their heart and soul.

We are all human beings who have a heart and a soul which are given to us at birth by God. It is a pity if we acquire the habit of playing with poor tone and making noise, and thereby do not make the most of our special gifts. If you only have a little time to practice and do not finish a piece, it is all right. Or if learning is very slow, such a thing does not matter at all. Being able to play the piano using a heartfelt, true, natural and musical tone becomes a great joy throughout your entire life.

The piano is a very difficult instrument when we think about the matter of tone and how to teach it. I want both teachers and trainees carefully to reconsider, to listen to good tone with concentration, to study so that you know the difference between good and bad tone.

*(In Part 2, I will discuss how to produce a good tone, and the importance of doing this from the very beginning of a student's study.)*

Reprinted from the *Matsumoto Newsletter*, Vol. 1, no. 9, February 27, 1992

This and other articles by Dr. Kataoka in this issue are translated by Mitsuo Furumachi and edited by Dr. Karen Hagberg.

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**HOW TO TEACH BEGINNERS, No. 23**  
**BAGATELLE (THEME) - BEETHOVEN**

**BY DR. HARUKO KATAOKA**

This piece is *allegretto* and in 2/4 time, C major. Considering just these things, we can understand that this is a light and enjoyable piece.

We must practice the left hand in measures 1-4 correctly. Because the piece is in duple time, the first beat is played down, and the second beat is up. This "down and up" feeling is the same as human breathing. Therefore, there is a half note on the first beat in each measure. Despite the fact that an accompaniment is always played softly, play this half note deep and long with a downstroke. Be sure to play the C in measure 1, the D in measure 2, the B in measure 3 and the C in measure 4 so that they are connected to each other, *legato*. The remaining three chords in each measure must be played very *lightly, softly and quietly* and all the same length. Be careful not to lengthen the third chord in each group.

We should play the first note, an upbeat, in the right hand with the third finger as we "inhale." Then we must sing out the following dotted note E, which is sung with a deep, heartfelt feeling. The C at the end of measure 1 going to the dotted B in measure 2 is the same pattern: a light, inhaled pickup note going to a singing downbeat. This pattern repeats itself through measure 4.

In measures 5-8 we sing out the chords in the right hand with a loud voice. The short notes in measure 7 are played lightly after these big chords, and the two notes ending the phrase in measure 8 should be played beautifully and *decrescendo*.

This piece is most difficult for the left hand, so we must practice this especially much. The difficulty is not so much in the order of the notes, but in keeping the balance.

Practice the left-hand 16th notes in rhythms by playing the first of each group of four with a long, deep tone, followed by three short, light notes. Doing this practice not only helps the student to execute this piece well, but it also teaches left-hand balance. Teachers, please be sure to teach the student how to do this practice week after week.

The right hand from the end of measure 16 through measure 17 may be practiced in the same way to produce good *legato*.

Play the two chords in measure 18 very lightly. Enjoy the harmony in measure 20, playing a musical tone by moving the fingertips with a soft hand. After this measure, the same music repeats itself to the end of the piece.

This composition is fun and beautiful. Please enjoy it.

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**LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY**  
**SUNDAY - FRIDAY, JUNE 7 - 12**  
**GRACE BAUGH-BENNETT, DIRECTOR**  
School of Music, Univ. of Louisville, Louisville, KY 40292  
**PHONE:** (502) 852-0537 **FAX:** (502) 423-0615 **EMAIL:** gbbenn01@ulkyvm.louisville.edu

We are honored to have Dr. Haruko Kataoka returning as master teacher for the institute this summer. In addition to teaching the *Piano Basics Course* (teacher training), Dr. Kataoka will also teach a limited number of children's lessons during the week. The student lessons are allotted on a first-come, first-served basis.

There are two options for teachers at the institute. You may register as a *participant*, which includes a lesson with Dr. Kataoka in addition to full observation privileges at the institute. Participants may also register this teacher training with the SAA. If you do not wish a lesson, you may register as an *auditor*, which includes the full observation privileges (including teacher training sessions). Adults who register as *observers* may observe all institute activities EXCEPT teacher training sessions.

All student institute participants receive three to five hours of daily classes. Daily piano lessons are taught by Bruce Anderson (St. Petersburg Beach, FL), Gretchen Smith (Greenville, NC), Kagari Tanabe (Bellingham, WA), and Linda Nakagawa (Sacramento, CA). Each student also has a daily theory class. The remaining classes are arranged according to the age and advancement of the students. They include creative movement, Musikgarten, improvisation and juggling classes.

In addition to the daily student recitals, all students will be featured on the *final recital*, Friday, June 13. Special recreational events during the week include a *picnic/swim party* and a *banquet* honoring Dr. Kataoka. Housing is available in Louisville Hall, a dorm located about two blocks from the School of Music. There are some nearby bed-and-breakfast establishments in addition to several hotels within a couple of miles of the university.

**The Louisville area is rich in recreational activities:**

The Louisville Zoo  
Kentucky Kingdom  
The Belle of Louisville (steamboat on the Ohio River)  
Louisville Science Museum  
Louisville Slugger Museum  
Kentucky Derby Museum at Churchill Down.  
Bemheim Forest (hiking/nature preserve)  
My Old Kentucky Home and The Stephen Foster Story are located nearby.

Brochures will be mailed to all Piano Basics Foundation members by early March. If you need additional brochures or failed to receive one, please contact the institute director.

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**STUDIO OF BRUCE BOINEY  
SUNDAY - TUESDAY, JUNE 14 -16**

**BRUCE BOINEY, DIRECTOR**

173 Sears Ave., Suite 273  
Louisville, KY 40207

**PHONE:** (502) 896-0416 **EMAIL:** Bboiney@aol.com

**Bruce's Place:**

Following the University of Louisville Institute, Dr. Kataoka will teach students for two days in the studio of Bruce Boiney. Lessons will be balanced with students throughout the Suzuki repertoire. Approximately three hours of lessons each day will be devoted to short *"workshop style"* lessons where students work on one piece of music. The remainder of each day will be comprised of 30-minute lessons where students have a "standard" lesson --scale, lesson piece, and reading.

It is unusual to be able to see Dr. Kataoka work in this way here in the United States and it proved to be a very educational format last summer. Teachers are welcome to observe, but space is limited. Please contact Bruce as soon as possible to take advantage of these "bonus" teaching days.

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**ATLANTA, GEORGIA**

**ATLANTA AREA SUZUKI PIANO ASSOCIATION  
TUESDAY - SATURDAY, JUNE 23 - 27**

**ROBIN BLANKENSHIP, CO-DIRECTOR**

2518 Country Lake Circle  
Powder Springs, GA 30127

**PHONE:** (770) 943-1218 **FAX:** (770) 222-9853 **EMAIL:** Rblan545@aol.com

**LEAH BRAMMER, CO-DIRECTOR**

4703 Township Walk  
Marietta, GA 30066

**PHONE:** (770) 992-2376 **EMAIL:** LBrammer@mindspring.com

**ABOUT THE WORKSHOP:**

This workshop will provide in-depth study of Piano Basics with Dr. Kataoka. The daily schedule consists of master class lessons for teachers and students and daily lecture time with Dr. Kataoka. Lessons with Dr. Kataoka will be available for all teacher participants and students who perform in the Friendship Concert. This is a Five- Day SAA-approved Teacher Training Institute.

**ABOUT THE FRIENDSHIP CONCERT:**

Students representing a variety of ages, levels, and geographic areas will be selected to perform in a Friendship

Concert at Spivey Hall on Tuesday evening, June 23. A dress rehearsal will be held Monday evening. Out-of-town students performing in the concert will receive a master class lesson with Dr. Kataoka on Tuesday or Wednesday. Teachers enrolled in the workshop are invited to submit videos of their students to be considered. Deadline for videos is May 1, 1998. See brochure for application form.

#### **ABOUT THE GRADUATION SEMINAR:**

The closing event of the week is the Atlanta Area Suzuki Piano Association's Third Graduation Concert. Teachers will have the opportunity to research the Graduation Process by attending the concert, dress rehearsal and a lecture about the AASPA Graduation Program. In addition, a panel from around the country will present their Graduation Programs and share how their Graduation Systems work.

#### **AN INVITATION:**

Join us in Atlanta at Spivey hall for an enjoyable week of learning. Activities will include Family Day on Tuesday, featuring Dr. Kataoka speaking to Parents and Teachers, a picnic by the lake and the Friendship Concert. On Wednesday evening a Teacher dinner will be held followed by the Graduation Panel discussion.

Spivey Hall is an elegant music recital facility with outstanding acoustics, located in a beautiful natural setting next to a lake, just 15 minutes south of downtown Atlanta.

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### **ROCHESTER, NEW YORK SUNDAY - THURSDAY, AUGUST 9 - 13**

#### **KAREN HAGBERG, DIRECTOR**

8 Prince Street, Rochester, NY 14607

**PHONE:** (716) 244-0490 **FAX:** (716) 244-3542 **EMAIL:** hagberg-drake@juno.com

- Our Rochester workshop will be held this year at the Woolard Gallery, located in downtown Rochester within walking distance of a large selection of restaurants and museums.
- Teachers and guests will stay at a nearby hotel. Some homestay available.
- Again this summer several students and teachers from Japan will be in attendance.
- A Friendship Concert featuring Japanese and American students will be held on Tuesday, August 11 in Kilbourn Hall at the Eastman School of Music.
- Karen and Dorothy will host a dinner for teachers in their home on Wednesday evening.  
This year's theme: Greek cuisine.
- Teachers enrolled full time are invited to bring a student who may audition for the Friendship Concert by videotape. Deadline: June 1
- Social activities will be planned for visiting students with our Japanese guests.

#### **RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

International Museum of Photography  
Strong Museum (Dolls & American Popular Culture)  
An Art Gallery, a Science Museum, a Planetarium  
Niagara Falls, located one hour from Rochester

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### **MY SUZUKI EXPERIENCE IN ROCHESTER**

#### **BY CORINNA CHANG, REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE**

The thought of having to fly 20,000 km alone, over 26 hours--not to mention changing planes four times--just to attend my first Suzuki Piano Basics workshop filled me with apprehension. Would the nine days of observation justify the cost, the time and the effort or would I be disappointed?

The workshop turned out to be a most intense and rewarding experience. With two Kawai grand pianos, a video recorder and a master teacher in Dr. Kataoka, Wilmot Hall in the picturesque campus of Nazareth College in Rochester was transformed into a temple of joyous learning.

Throughout the workshop, I was humbled by the fact that there was so much to learn. Dr. Kataoka's energy and dedication were most inspiring. I was particularly struck by her constant admonitions to the teachers to be firm with the basics--beauty of tone, preparation and readiness, even the basic hand position and posture. I began to understand her refusal to tolerate sloppiness, for we teachers have to be the BEST models and that our pupils were but a reflection of our teaching. Succumbing to the easier road would not be acceptable, and I admire Dr. Kataoka for her steadfastness and honesty in the quest for perfection.

Despite all the hard work, being at Nazareth College and the dorms was really like being in a summer camp. The friendliness and camaraderie shared by the teachers, the wonderful playing from the pupils from the U.S and Japan, the hospitality of Karen Hagberg and her very organized crew and the sheer energy and spirit of the workshop made it a pleasure to be there.

I would like to encourage the teachers, especially the "rookies" to take full advantage of the learning opportunity offered by Dr. Kataoka and the warm hospitality of Rochester. Indeed, "with love, much can be accomplished" in our mission to impart in our students the ability to play with beautiful tone, spirit and ease.

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**SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA**  
**SUNDAY - THURSDAY, AUGUST 16 - 20**  
**LINDA NAKAGAWA, DIRECTOR**  
242 River Acres Drive, Sacramento, CA 95831  
PHONE/FAX: (916) 422-2952 EMAIL: lgnak@quiknet.com

The first time I observed Dr. Kataoka teaching a workshop, I remember thinking, "*Oh, so this is the Suzuki Method!*" Since that first experience I have been trying to study with her as much as possible to learn about teaching.

The students, families and teachers from the Sacramento area have been very fortunate to have Dr. Kataoka help us for several years. We know how important it is to get out and study with Dr. Kataoka so we teachers want to invite everyone interested, to come to the workshop in Sacramento. We will try to create the best environment conducive to learning. We think that the American workshops are the most valuable way for all teachers and students to study, unless they can actually visit Matsumoto!

We are pleased to announce that the workshop will be held in the Sacramento Convention Center in downtown Sacramento. Numerous homestay opportunities are also available for teachers.

This year we will again welcome teachers and students from Matsumoto, Japan. Approximately ten students will join with American students to present a Friendship Concert.

***A special invitation is extended to teachers to bring a student to have a lesson with Dr. Kataoka or another teacher from Matsumoto. This enhances the teacher's own week of study and training. However, space is limited, so call as soon as possible if you want to bring a student. You may submit a video tape if your student wishes to audition for the Friendship Concert.***

Being the capital city of California, downtown Sacramento has many restaurants and interesting shops, most within easy walking distance of the workshop location. Of special interest to teachers during after-workshop hours are *Old Town Sacramento, The California State Fair and Mall Shopping.*

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## **WHY GO TO A SUMMER WORKSHOP?**

**BY JUDY PRICHARD, OAK HARBOR, WASHINGTON**

After attending two summer workshops, the most recent being Sacramento in the summer of 1997, and reflecting on the impact they had on my teaching skills I wanted to encourage others to make plans to attend by sharing the following thoughts:

1. The basics REALLY are basics! Almost all problems addressed by Dr. Kataoka were helped by returning to the basics, i.e., posture, balance or rhythm, even pieces played by more advanced students.
2. I couldn't clearly hear many of the subtle tonal differences for the first couple of days. The repetitive nature of the teaching at the master lessons helped me absorb a higher concept of sound and what I could expect my students to hear. I have been amazed at the tonal differences they can hear and produce, IF I hear it myself and then truly expect more from them.

3. Talk less-play more! I also was inspired by the young teachers from Japan who communicated so well with the American students. The modeling was very clear, always illustrating basic concepts. Students were able to effect changes quickly and with understanding.

As a relatively new Suzuki Piano Basics teacher, it was reassuring to be with so many teachers, all simply hoping to grow personally in order to help students in the best way possible. I urge everyone to make the effort to participate in a summer workshop and return to their studios with the idea of making some changes. As I teach, a week has not gone by in which I have not recalled a principle, a quote, a sound, or an idea from the Sacramento Workshop.

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TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP IN PIANO BASICS FOUNDATION AND TO CONTINUE RECEIVING THE NEWSLETTER WITHOUT INTERRUPTION, SEND YOUR DUES OF \$25.00 (CHECKS IN U.S. FUNDS PAYABLE TO PIANO BASICS FOUNDATION TO: PIANO BASICS FOUNDATION, 242 RIVER ACRES DRIVE, SACRAMENTO, CA 95831.

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Please send corrections to [Kenneth Wilburn](#), web editor for **Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation News**.

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First Online Edition: 16 August 1998

Last Revised: 21 February 2001